

REMARKS

Applicants submit this Amendment in reply to the Final Office Action dated June 3, 2003. As an initial matter, Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's indication of the allowability of claims 11, 45, and 47-52.

In this Amendment, Applicants propose to cancel claims 2, 5-9, 12-13, 15, 16, 19-23, 25, 26, 29-33, 35, 36, 39-43, and 46, without prejudice or disclaimer, and add new claims 53-68.

Before entry of this Amendment, claims 2, 5-9, 11-13, 15, 16, 19-23, 25, 26, 29-33, 35, 36, 39-43, and 45-52 were pending in this application. After entry of this Amendment, claims 11, 45, and 47-68 are pending in this application.

The originally-filed specification, claims, abstract, and drawings fully support the subject matter of new claims 53-68. Specifically, the subject matter of new claims 53-68 are supported at least, for example, by originally filed claims 2-9, 12, and 37-43. No new matter was introduced.

In the Final Office Action dated June 3, 2003, the Examiner rejected claims 2, 5-9, 12, 15, 16, 19-23, 25, 26, 29-33, 35, 36, and 39-43 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,306,294 to Winston et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,100,381 to Burns, and rejected claims 13 and 46 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Winston et al. in view of Burns, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,810,837 to Hofmann et al. By this Amendment, Applicants have cancelled claims 2, 5-9, 12-13, 15, 16, 19-23, 25, 26, 29-33, 35, 36, 39-43, and 46, without prejudice or disclaimer, rendering the rejections moot.

Independent claims 11 and 45 were allowed in the Final Office Action dated June 3, 2003. Dependent claims 47-68 depend either directly or indirectly from one of claims

11 and 45, and thus are allowable for the same reasons those claims are allowable. In addition, at least some of the dependent claims recite unique combinations that are neither taught nor suggested by the art and therefore also are separately patentable.

Applicants respectfully request that this Amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 be entered by the Examiner, placing claims 11, 45, and 47-68 in condition for allowance. Applicants submit that the proposed additions of claims 53-68 do not raise new issues or necessitate the undertaking of any additional search of the art by the Examiner, since all of the elements and their relationships claimed were either earlier claimed or inherent in the claims as examined. Moreover, all of the new claims depend from claims already deemed allowable by the Examiner. Therefore, this Amendment should allow for immediate action by the Examiner.

Furthermore, Applicants respectfully point out that the final action by the Examiner presented some new arguments as to the application of the art against Applicants' invention. The entering of the Amendment would allow the Applicants to reply to the final rejections (by rendering them moot due to the cancellation of claims) and place the application in condition for allowance.

The amendments also would place the application in better form for appeal, should the Examiner dispute the patentability of the pending claims.

In view of the foregoing remarks, the claimed invention, is neither anticipated nor rendered obvious in view of the prior art references cited against this application.

Applicants therefore request the entry of this Amendment, the Examiner's reconsideration of the application, and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

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The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization in the Office Action.


In discussing the specification, claims, abstract, and drawings in this Amendment, it is to be understood that Applicants are in no way intending to limit the scope of the claims to any exemplary embodiments described in the specification or abstract and/or shown in the drawings. Rather, Applicants are entitled to have the claims interpreted broadly, to the maximum extent permitted by statute, regulation, and applicable case law.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our Deposit Account No. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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